

Why isn't Labour doing better in the polls?

A hundred years ago, there was everything to play for, votes and equal rights for women, worker's rights, decent free education to secondary and tertiary level, universal health services, pensions. A long list of things that were needed for a decent, democratic society where the needy and disadvantaged had an equal access to a fulfilled life. During the twentieth century, most of these things were achieved. Despite attempts in the latter half of the century by right wing governments to chisel away at these gains, much of the original socialist programme had been accomplished. So much so that today's generations take it as read that these things are their due and there is no need for further struggles or to oppose the siren songs of the neo-liberals. Therein lies Labour's problem - either we must wait until the Right has destroyed enough of the twentieth century's achievements that new generations feel the need to fight for a better society again or Labour must find a fresh platform for the twenty-first century to build on the twentieth century's achievements.

You may argue, with some justification, that Labour had a chance to do this at the beginning of this century and blew it. We didn't do enough to counter the malaise that promotes individualism, labels the less fortunate as workshy, the social safety net as a burden on 'hardworking families', social medicine as inefficient and expensive (you should try the alternative) and the public sector as undesirable. We didn't recognise some of the things that matter to our people, like decent affordable housing, and indulged in imperialist forays and pandered to the neo-liberal ideals of the financial barons. It wasn't all bad, of course, but Labour lacked vision and policy ideas relevant to a set of Labour goals for the twenty first century. Cameron has recognised this and, as a PR master, talks the talk of just such a set of goals that the electorate can respond to, even though in reality most of the Coalition's legislation has the opposite intention and has unexpected consequences that follow neatly along neo-liberal lines.

More than ever, Labour needs to make its voice heard and offer a platform that people can respond to. One that sets the country back onto a more civilised course towards fairness, equality of opportunity, and concern for the vulnerable, disadvantaged and poor that is not just a political sound bite but is matched by action. Yes, we have to live within our means, pay back our debts and cope with a failing European economy and a banker's fantasy heaven, but the Coalition doesn't have any viable answers. The more austerity they impose, the more people they put in jeopardy by unemployment, poverty and loss of opportunity for the young, the more they cut into essential services, infrastructure, health and education, then the worse it gets and the bigger the 'deficit' gets. A downward spiral to the point at which a Dickens' novel would seem like a social paradise. Their neo-liberal ideas are vested in individualism, big company mentality and a narrow parochial view that the markets will always provide and that 'for profit' rather than 'for service' is good. They do not recognise the inefficiency and wastefulness of their approach (privatising the NHS will be a good example) nor do they recognise the contribution that the public sector makes in sharing resources efficiently (and supporting businesses), or the need to invest in people, particularly in the young and in aspiring SMEs.

Most of our country men and women, the young and the elderly will come to depend on the Labour movement to protect them from the ravages being visited upon us. We mustn't let them down.

On our own, we can't do much about the National situation - but we could do something about things locally. Either by community action or by giving our electors something to vote for. So how about it?

John Page, Editor

The deadline for the next newsletter is:

January 24th 2012

Send items to :

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100 Club Winners

Christmas Draw

Ticket 67 - John Foster

November Draw

1. P & S Tripp (60)

2. J. Lee (94)

3. T. Silk (162)

The 100 Club winners are drawn after each CLP Meeting.

Funds raised are used to fight elections.

To join the 100 Club, call Linda Harvey on:
01279 410435

Hertford Ware & District Branch

The next Branch meeting will be on **Tuesday 10th January at 8 p.m.** in the Synod Room, St. Joseph's Church Hall, St. Johns Street, Hertford. All members and supporters are welcome.

Hertford & Stortford Constituency

The Constituency Party (Branches: Stortford Area; Hertford, Ware & District) . The next meeting will be on **Monday 16th January** at 8.00 p.m. at The Drill hall, Ware. All members and supporters are welcome.

Calling Young Members

(and the Young in Heart!) Most Fridays at 7.00 pm Young Labour meets upstairs in the White Horse, Castle St. in Hertford. Come along and join in, if it is your first time call 01992 550353 for details.

Branch Get-Together 9th December

This was well attended and, judging by the continuous hubbub, there was plenty of earnest and passionate conversation.

We drew the winning ticket for the Christmas hamper and further tickets for the extra prizes kindly brought along by members.

These were won by Veronica Frazer, Evelyn Foster, Norman Board and Terry Betts.

Dates for your Diary

Branch Meetings:

2012 Meetings:

10th January

14th February

13th March

10th April

9th May

12th June

10th July

11th September

9th October

13th November

Meetings are generally on the 2nd Tuesday in the month

[No meetings in August or December]

CLP Meetings:

2012 meetings

16th January (W)

20th February (W)

19th March (BS)

16th April (W)

21st May (W)

18th June (BS)

16th July (W)

17th September (W)

15th October (BS)

19th November (W)

NB: (W) is Drill Hall Ware, (BS) meetings are held in Bishops Stortford.

[No meetings in August or December]

All members are welcome.

Branch Annual Dinner at The Salisbury Arms Hotel, Hertford.

The dinner will be on Friday 10th February, starting at 7.30 p.m.

We tend to congregate in the back bar beforehand. We think we shall be dining in the Downstairs Dining-room this time. A three course meal with tea or coffee at the end will cost £16. A two course meal will cost £13 (still very reasonable). Extras will be drinks ordered individually and the usual whip round for gratuities for staff at the end of the meal. **Please will you let Shirley Wood (2 Westfield Road, Hertford, SG14 3DJ Telephone 01992 584398) know your choices of Starter and Main course in advance, by Monday 6th February, if possible.**

This will help staff serve the meal quickly. Choices are as follows:

Starters

Cream of Potato & Leek soup with croutons

Smoked Mackerel & cucumber salad

Chicken liver Parfait with Plum Chutney & warm toast

Main Courses

Roast Sirloin of Beef with Yorkshire Pudding

Turkey Escalope with Orange & Cranberry sauce

Grilled Fillet of Salmon with Lemon Butter

Stir Fried Vegetables with Soya sauce on a bed of Chinese Noodles

All meals accompanied by Fresh Vegetables and Potatoes

There will be a selection of desserts and teas or coffee.

Pay on the Day. We hope you can come

The Branch Christmas Raffle, 2011

Many thanks to all our members who took part in this. A marvellous £392 were raised for Branch funds and the Christmas Hamper was won by Sarah Newstead of Bengoe.

Ware Dickensian Night 2nd December

We went with Great Expectations and we were not disappointed; it was a great event, with crowds of people and wonderful stalls. Our stall was a success; all the Tombola prizes were won and Jan had 29 children playing her lovely little game. We raised £139 for Branch funds.